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# DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

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## AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF TEACHING<sup>1</sup>

BY A. P. MATHEWS, PH.D.

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It is the fashion nowadays to talk of privileges and rewards, but there is a word too seldom heard,—it is *responsibility*. So I shall say something about a teacher's responsibility, a little about his privileges and very little about his rewards.

Of all occupations teaching is the hardest, the worst paid, the least honored and the most important. Looking back on twenty years of it, I wonder at the temerity of those who enter it. They come probably, as most of us come, not primarily to teach, but to secure opportunities to learn about things; to satisfy that insatiable curiosity which heaven has implanted within us that we may rise from the mud from which we sprang and win our freedom from the trammels of matter and circumstance. But having satisfied in part that "satiabile curiosity" and, like the elephant's child in Kipling's story, having our noses pulled in very painful experiences, "having found the great, gray, greasy Limpopo," we come back to our aunts and our children and our other relatives, to spank them with the experience we have gained. Having found by study and by experiment some small part of the truth of nature, it is a pleasure and a necessity to tell some one about it, and we become teachers.

The teachers, those without as well as those within the schools, are a great factor in the progress of the world. Theirs is the responsibility of opening the doors of the minds of each following generation and letting in the light. It is they who must call attention to what is passing outside the windows of that railroad car, going at express speed, in which we make the journey of life. Without the teachers, the whole journey of the train would be spent by most travelers in the dining car.

They must impart those principles which have been won by the hardest toil and which burnished in the will of experience have proven to be shining jewels, principles which have been wrung from the hard

<sup>1</sup> Read at the annual convention of the National League of Nursing Education, held in Kansas City, April 11-14, 1921.

earth by the labor, the sweat, the tears, the blood of our forefathers. Particularly, all must guard and preserve and transmit untarnished that priceless jewel, the principle which has led us forward in all material and intellectual ways, the principle of doubt, of reasoning, of imagination tested by experiment. This is the principle of the experimental method, the method of winning from nature her secrets by experimentation. It is what we mean by the research method.

Too often teaching may be regarded as the imparting of facts. It is in reality the leading to the light. The teacher has a coat of arms, and his motto is the motto of the birds of passage which follow the seasons: "*Lux mea Dux*," Light leads me. Light is my leader.

The greatest happiness of a teacher is in watching the awakening of a mind, hitherto enshrouded in darkness, as the light penetrates it. It is a flower which opens.

Cities and thrones and powers  
Stand in time's eye  
Hardly as long as flowers  
Which daily die.  
But as new buds put forth  
To glad new men,  
So from the spent and unconsidered earth  
The cities rise again.

So, as generation after generation passes back into the earth from which it came, new generations of men spring from this spent and unconsidered earth. And it is the teachers who stand between the generations, passing to each successive one that knowledge which the previous ones have gained in their brief interval of life.

By teaching, a man creates a thousand who can carry on his work. His ideas sown broadcast germinate in the fertile minds of those about him. The light, dim though it may be, shining from him will start a thousand lights in the minds of those about him. He rejoices in the use his pupils make of his ideas and teaching. He multiplies himself in them a thousand, thousand fold.

Of the seed he sows but little is fertile, and much of that little will fall in spent and unproductive soil, but some fertile seed and fertile soil will yield a wonderful harvest. One never knows when he is sowing fertile and when barren seed. He has no biometer in which he can put each seed and see if it will grow. He can tell only by planting it. Nor does he know often when he is sowing,—hence his great responsibility in sowing, to be sure at any rate that it is not the seed of weeds.

Principles are the fertilizers of the mind, the phosphate, potassium and nitrates of the intellectual harvest,—and of these principles that which states that knowledge is won by hard toil, imagination,

and experimentation, is the most valuable. This indeed is the food needed by the wheat of the farms of the mind. It is this which nourishes all the material, all the mental, and part of the spiritual civilization of the world.

This principle of winning knowledge by experimentation rather than by dialectic was nearly lost during the dark ages. Discovered and refined first by the Greeks, it was handed down as a precious fertilizer through the twelve centuries until Roger Bacon. He cherished it for the following generations, foreseeing all that it meant to the world. In our day it is still so rare that it is but the few who possess it.

And what is our reward? It is not money. We do not accumulate wealth. No one has become poorer in order that we may live in luxury. Hardship is our lot. Our reward is usually not fame; for fame is not often won by teaching. It is not power in the sense men use that word. We have no offices to bestow; we can neither exalt into nor deprive from office. But our reward is sure; and our satisfaction is great. Our reward is the gratitude of those to whom we have given light; our reward is in the approval of conscience, in doing necessary duty, in being of service to others, in having helped mankind along its way.

What a great privilege it is to be a teacher. We do not make for a man his shoes, nor his coat. We are not providing his dinner, nor keeping his body warm, nor building a roof over his head. It is our privilege to clothe, to nourish, to warm, to protect the spirit and mind rather than the body of man. What occupation can compare with this one? The minister gives a man solace and comfort at death; commerce and business provide for his bodily cares; but the far more important duty of providing him a guide, a solace, a friend, for that dark, painful, hard, and fatiguing journey through life, rests upon the teacher.

Herodotus says that the Macedonians used to mourn when a child was born, and to rejoice when death had overtaken one of their number. For, they said, so sad, so hard, so cruel is the journey of life that they wept to see one start on it, and rejoiced when one had finished it.

But in the course of time, so often has the journey been made, so many myriads of men have sprung from the mould, pressed forward and fallen back to mould again, that by the experiences of our fathers, we have learned a little of how to avoid some of its worst dangers, a philosophy to strengthen the heart, knowledge of the direction, and some faint idea of why we should press on at all costs.

It is the teacher who stands by the side of one who is entering

the race of life. He gives him a compass by which he may find his direction; the compass is the experimental method. He places a cloak about him, the cloak of knowledge; and he whispers into his ear those philosophic maxims and hopes to give him courage to bear the struggles, the despairs, and to face with a stout heart his final and foreseen defeat.

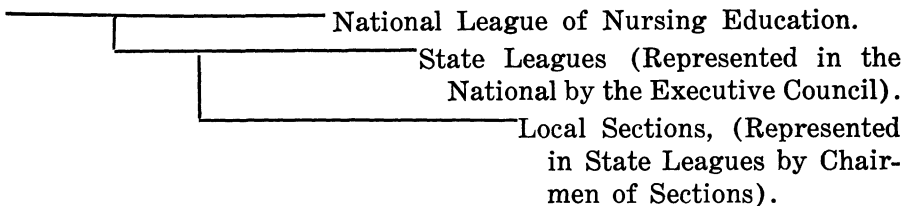
#### REORGANIZATION OF STATE LEAGUES OF NURSING EDUCATION

BY ANNA C. JAMME, R.N.

*President National League of Nursing Education*

At the annual meeting of the National League of Nursing Education, held in Kansas City during April, the plan for reorganization of State Leagues, as recommended by the Revision Committee, was adopted.

The organization plan adopted in 1912, when the name of the organization was changed from the Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses to the National League of Nursing Education, has held through these years. State Leagues have been organized and their articulation with the National has been by representation of state presidents, the presidents forming the Advisory Council. In time, and as the interest in the various states developed, localities organized groups in order to hold more frequent meetings, consequently, city leagues were organized which, in many instances, formed a large membership. It then became necessary to establish a plan of organization, whereby the local leagues would have connection with the National and, on recommendation of the Revision Committee appointed to work this out, the following plan was accepted. This consists of local leagues, which are designated as sections of the State League, such sections to elect their chairman, vice chairman, secretary and treasurer, with representation in the State League by the Chairmen of the sections. The following table may serve to illustrate the connection between local and state leagues, and the representation of state leagues in the National.



The question of dues was considered and, while the National Organization made no specific recommendations, the Advisory Council